



THE VANISHING BOMBERS

**They didn't crash –
yet they failed to
return from their
death-dealing
missions !**



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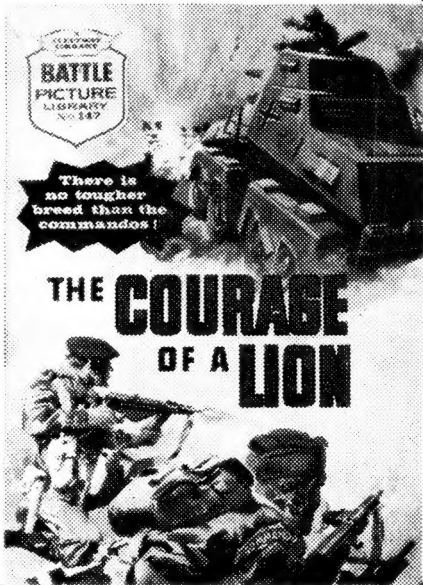
ALL-ACTION ISSUES EVERY MONTH

- ★ No. 145 **FIGHTING COMMAND**
Every time he risked his life, the fate of a division hung in the balance.
- ★ No. 146 **TIME FUSE**
Ten seconds to zero . . . the countdown to destruction !
- ★ No. 147 **THE COURAGE OF A LION**
There is no tougher breed than the commandos !
- ★ No. 148 **SWORD OF HONOUR**
They wore their badge of shame into the last great battle . . .

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THE VANISHING BOMBERS

IF LAK BARRAGES THAT TURNED THE SKIES INTO AN INFERNO OF FIRE AND FLYING STEEL . . . ENEMY FIGHTERS THAT SWOOPED LIKE WOLVES ON CRIPPLED PLANES . . . THESE WERE NORMAL HAZARDS OF BOMBER CREWS IN WORLD WAR II. **BUT NO.3 SPECIAL SERVICE LANCASTER SQUADRON RAN INTO AN EVEN MORE SINISTER MENACE IN THE HOSTILE SKIES OVER ITALY . . .**

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
O-ORANGE IS MISSING!...
THAT'S THE THIRD LANCASTER
IN SEVEN DAYS THAT HAS
JUST VANISHED INTO
THIN AIR!



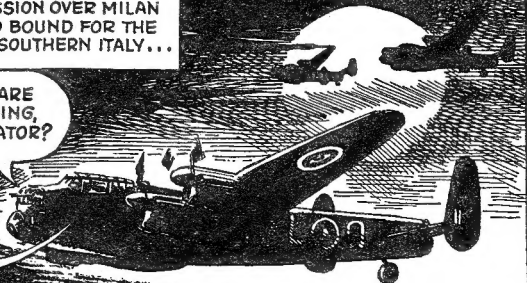
Chapter I.

Unconscious Crew

O-ORANGE, HER BOMBING MISSION OVER MILAN COMPLETED, WAS HOMEWARD BOUND FOR THE BRITISH AIRFIELD AT BARI IN SOUTHERN ITALY...

HOW ARE WE DOING, NAVIGATOR?

WE'RE WELL OVER THE ADRIATIC, SKIPPER... A CLEAR SKY AND NO PROBLEMS...



BUT EVEN AS THE NAVIGATOR SAID THE WORDS HE SAW THE TWO HOSTILE PLANES HURLING LIKE HAWKS TOWARDS THEM...

LOOK OUT, NICK... A COUPLE OF MESSERSCHMITTS ARE TRYING TO LATCH ON TO OUR TAIL!

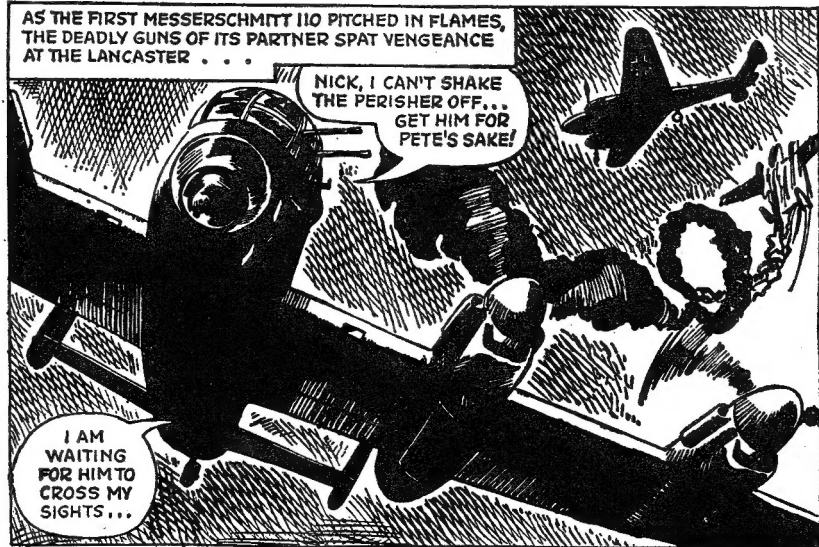
LET THEM COME...



MATT NICK, WHO HAD JOINED THE R.A.F FROM CANADA, TO BECOME THE SQUADRON'S TOP-SCORING REAR-GUNNER, WAS KNOWN AS A COOL, COLD-BLOODED CUSTOMER . . .



AS THE FIRST MESSERSCHMITT 110 PITCHED IN FLAMES, THE DEADLY GUNS OF ITS PARTNER SPAT VENGEANCE AT THE LANCASTER . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

SUDDENLY, THE LANCASTER CREW HEARD THE FIERCE CLAMOUR AND SMELT PUNGENT ODOUR OF SPENT EXPLOSIVE THAT TOLD THEM MATT NICK WAS SHOOTING IT OUT WITH THE GERMAN FIGHTER . . .

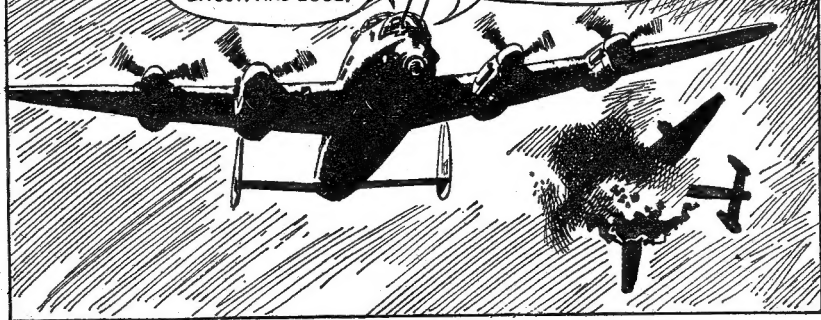
WHO'S HIT WHO?

NICK'S DONE IT... HE'S GOT THE SECOND JERRY!

THE JUBILANT CREW OF *O-ORANGE* CHEERED . . . ALL EXCEPT THE SILENT NICK, WHO MERELY CLEARED HIS GUNS READY FOR ANY FURTHER ATTACK . . .

GOOD FOR YOU, NICK! FROM NOW ON WE'RE IN A FRIENDLY SKY... AND ONLY TWENTY MINUTES FROM BARI AND OUR BACON AND EGGS!

O-ORANGE CALLING CONTROL. MISSION SUCCESSFUL... ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL OH- SIX-FORTY HOURS...



CHEERED BY THE SUCCESS OF THEIR MISSION, O-ORANGE'S CREW RELAXED . . .

YOU'RE THE ONLY CANADIAN I EVER MET, NICK, WHO NEVER WHOOPS IT UP AND CELEBRATES...

I CELEBRATE BY GIVING YOU MY SPECIAL BLACK COFFEE...



UNSMILING AS EVER, NICK FILLED ALL THE MUGS EXCEPT HIS OWN . . .

YOU'VE DOWNED FOUR JERRY PLANES THIS MONTH, NICK... COME ON, EVEN YOU CAN RAISE A SMILE THIS MORNING...

I DO NOT SMILE WHEN I KILL...



The Vanishing Bombers

AS THE CREW DRANK, MATT NICK
WATCHED THEM NARROWLY ...
THEN, MINUTES LATER

IT'S THE
COFFEE ...

WHAT'S THE
MATTER WITH
ME... EVERYTHING
IS GOING
BLURRY!



THE PILOT WAS THE LAST TO COLLAPSE.
NICK CLAMBERED. CATLIKE PAST THE
INERT FORMS OF THE SPRAWLING
CREW ...

THE LANDING
LIGHTS OF BARI
AIRFIELD ARE AHEAD
... I LEFT IT LATE
TO DISPOSE OF THE
CREW... I MUST
HURRY!



THE LANCASTER BANKED IN A SHARP TURN AND HEADED BACK OVER THE ADRIATIC. NICK SWITCHED ON THE RADIO FREQUENCY . . .

MATNIC CALLING X ZONE, AM FLYING NORTH NORTH-EAST FROM BARI, CAN YOU HEAR ME, X ZONE?



DROPPING FLUENTLY INTO A FOREIGN TONGUE, THE REAR-GUNNER WHO NOW REVEALED HIS NAME AS MATNIC CALLED FOR ORDERS . . .

YOU HAD BETTER HURRY, X ZONE . . . I AM OBSERVED BY ANOTHER LANCASTER...

X ZONE CALLING MATNIC, CONTINUE ON PRESENT COURSE. YOUR HOMETLAND WELCOMES AND SALUTES YOU . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

AS DAWN BROKE OVER BARI AIRFIELD, A LAST LONE LANCASTER OF THE SPECIAL SQUADRON TAXIED IN FROM THE MILAN RAID

GLAD YOU MADE IT, MIKE. O-ORANGE IS MISSING.

SHE CAN'T BE... I SAW HER CIRCLING CLOSE BY AS WE WERE MAKING OUR LANDING-RUN!

FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT MIKE HAINES HAD NO DOUBT THAT THE OVERDUE LANCASTER WOULD BE LANDING WITHIN MINUTES...

BACON AND EGGS FOR G-GEORGE NOW, COOK... AND FOR O-ORANGE IN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES!

SO O-ORANGE HAS RETURNED?



HEARING THE SURPRISED VOICE, MIKE TURNED TO SEE ONE OF THE FOREIGN MILITARY MISSIONS WHICH OCCASIONALLY VISITED BRITISH SQUADRONS. HIS SECOND PILOT, BUSTER BROWN, EXPLAINED . . .

IT'S THE TEAM OF OBSERVERS FROM CROSLAVIA . . . IT SEEMS NOTHING'S GONE RIGHT IN THE SQUADRON SINCE THEY ARRIVED LAST WEEK . . .

WHY SHOULD THEY BE SO INTERESTED IN O-ORANGE?

CROSLAVIA WAS A SMALL BALKAN STATE OCCUPIED BY THE NAZIS. ITS BRAVE GUERRILLA FIGHTERS STILL FOUGHT GALLANTLY AGAINST THEIR INVADERS . . .

MIKE FORGOT ABOUT THE INCIDENT UNTIL THE ADJUTANT STRODE IN . . .

WE'RE ALL GROUNDED?
THIS IS CRAZY!
WHAT'S UP?

O-ORANGE
IS STILL MISSING...
THE THIRD PLANE TO
VANISH...

... SO ALL OUR
AIRCRAFT ARE TO
BE TESTED FOR
ENGINE FAULTS.

FOR THREE DAYS THE AIRCREWS KICKED THEIR HEELS IN THE MESS, GRUMBLING AT THEIR ENFORCED IDLENESS . . .

ANOTHER
DAY ON THE
GROUND AND I'M
PUTTING IN FOR
A TRANSFER,
MIKE.

GUESS WHO'S JUST BOWLED
IN FROM NOWHERE . . .
MATT NICK, O-ORANGE'S
REAR-GUNNER!

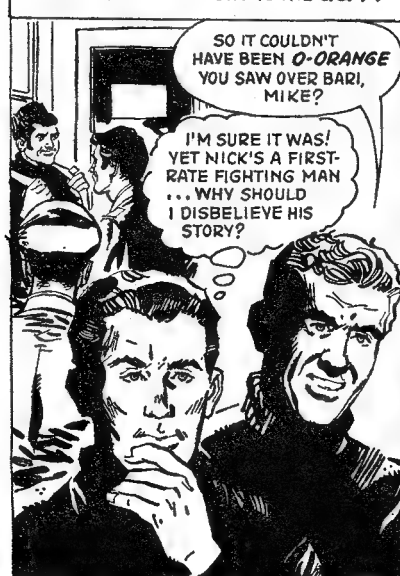


The Vanishing Bombers

AIRCREW WHO RETURNED DAYS AFTER THEIR PLANE HAD BEEN GIVEN UP AS LOST ALWAYS RECEIVED A TUMULTUOUS WELCOME . . .



NICK WENT OFF TO REPORT TO THE C.O. . .



NICK'S ACCOUNT OF ENEMY ACTION BRINGING DOWN HIS LANCASTER REMOVED THE C.O.'S SUSPICIONS ABOUT ENGINE FAILURE . . .





MIKE RETURNED TO G-GEORGE,
REPAIRED SINCE THE PREVIOUS
RAID . . .

WE'RE TO MAKE
A LOW LEVEL BOMBING
ATTACK ON THE
MARSHALLING YARDS
AT MODENA ... BRIEFING
IN THREE MINUTES
FROM NOW.

PRANGING
TRAINS SUITS
ME!

AS DUSK DREW ON, THE SQUADRON STOOD-TO,
WITH ALL PREPARATIONS FOR THE RAID
COMPLETED . . .

HALLO, NICK...
WHERE DID YOU
SPRING FROM?

THE
ADJUTANT
SAYS I'M TO
FLY WITH YOU
TONIGHT IN
G-GEORGE...

ALL ALONG THE FLYING ROUTE OF THE SPECIAL SQUADRON, THE GERMAN CONTROL POSTS PLOTTED THE PLANES' APPROACH WITH ARROWS ON GLASS MAPS . . .



AS G-GEORGE SPED THROUGH THE NORTHERN ITALIAN SKIES NEAR MODENA, THE ALERTED GROUND DEFENCES ERUPTED WITH CASCADING METAL . . .



THE NOSE OF THE LANCASTER DIPPED FOR THE STRAIGHT FIFTEEN-MILE RUN THROUGH A CURTAIN OF FLYING STEEL...



SUDDENLY G-GEORGE SEEMED TO BE PINNED TO THE SKY IN A BURST OF BLINDING LIGHT . . .



TO MIKE AND HIS CREW, G-GEORGE SEEMED HUGE AND VULNERABLE WITH EVERY GUN DOWN BELOW AIMING AT THEM. THE PLANE SWOOPED DANGEROUSLY LOW, AND . . .

THE MARSHALLING YARDS!

BOMB
GONE!

THE LANCASTER BUCKED LIKE A MUSTANG AS THE MARKER BOMB BURST INTO FLAME...

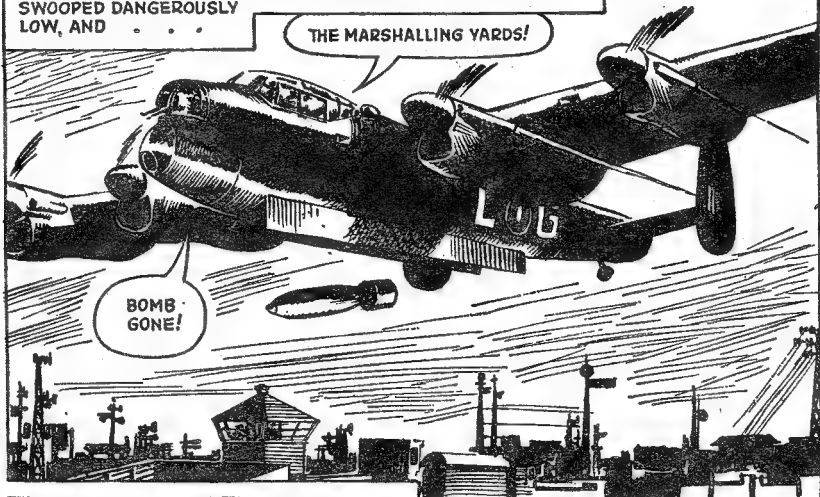
CLEAN AS
A WHISTLE
... BEST
EGG I EVER
LAID!

HALLO,
MAINFORCE ...
WE'VE LIT THE
TARGET FOR
YOU!

THE GREEN AND WHITE LIGHTS OF THE FLARE-BOMB LIT THE RAILYARDS LIKE A FAIRGROUND, AND MIKE HURLED THE LANCASTER INTO A STEEP CLIMB . . .

ENEMY
FIGHTERS
ASTERN!

I'M GOING TO
DIVE PAST THE
SEARCHLIGHTS. WHY
ISN'T OUR NEW REAR-
GUNNER HAVING
A GO?



The Vanishing Bombers

HEADING DOWN THE BLINDING BEAM, MIKE HOPED TO SHAKE OFF THE JUNKERS 88S, SWOOPING IN HIS REAR . . .

NICK'S GOT ONE OF THEM...
WHAT A GUNNER!

HE'S ON TO A SECOND ONE...



ALL AT ONCE THE SEARCHLIGHTS WERE LIFTED FROM G-GEORGE, PROBING INSTEAD FOR THE MAIN FORCE WHICH WERE DROPPING THEIR BOMBS . . .

THE JERRIES WON'T GET A TRAIN OUT OF HERE FOR MONTHS, MIKE.

WE'LL JOIN IN FROM THE NORTH AND DROP THE REST OF OUR BOMB LOAD.



AGAIN G-GEORGE PLUNGED INTO THE FLARE-LIT AREA OF VICIOUS FLAK AND TRACER . . .

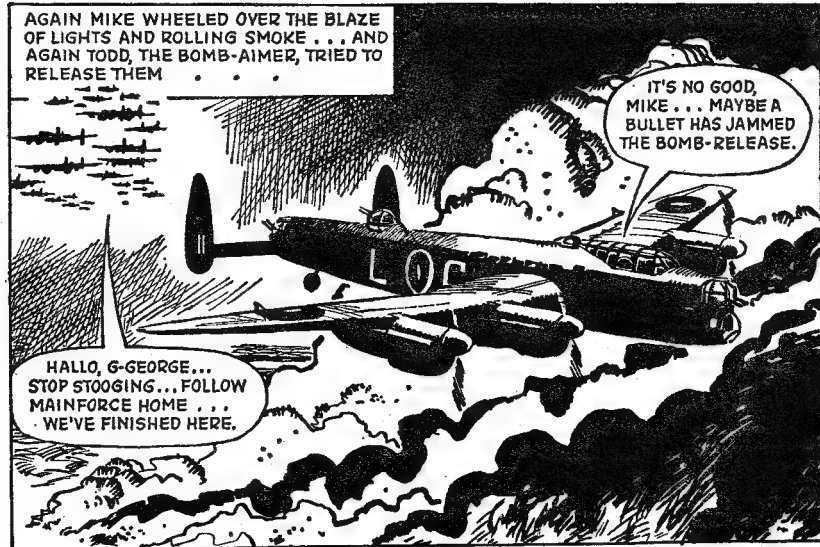
DON'T LOUNGE ABOUT, TODD . . .
DROP THE COOKIES!

SOMETHING'S
WRONG, MIKE . . .
OUR FIVE-HUNDRED-
POUNDS WON'T
GO DOWN!

AGAIN MIKE WHEELED OVER THE BLAZE OF LIGHTS AND ROLLING SMOKE . . . AND AGAIN TODD, THE BOMB-AIMER, TRIED TO RELEASE THEM . . .

IT'S NO GOOD,
MIKE . . . MAYBE A
BULLET HAS JAMMED
THE BOMB-RELEASE.

HALLO, G-GEORGE...
STOP STOOGING... FOLLOW
MAINFORCE HOME . . .
WE'VE FINISHED HERE.



AS THE BATTLE-BATTERED SQUADRON HEADED FOR THE COAST AND THE SOUTHERN RUN TO BARI, MIKE PULLED G-GEORGE AWAY FROM THE FLAK.

WHAT A TURN-UP...
ALL WE DROPPED WERE THE
SPARKLERS TO LIGHT THE
SHOW.

WE'LL BE OVER THE
ADRIATIC IN A FEW MINUTES
... WHO'S GOT THE COFFEE FLASK?

THE SILENT NICK PRODUCED HIS BIG FLASK.

I LOOK AFTER YOU
ALL.

I WASN'T
TOO KEEN ON
HAVING NICK IN
OUR CREW BUT
WE'D HAVE BEEN
SHOT DOWN
WITHOUT
HIM.

OVER THE FRIENDLY SEA THEY RELAXED,
BUT SUDDENLY . . .

NICK...
WHAT HAVE
YOU GIVEN
US?

THE COFFEE...
IT'S POISONED!

MIKE DROPPED HIS MUG, FIGHTING THE HAZE THAT CLOGGED HIS MOVEMENTS.

YOU SNAKE!

I FIGHT
FOR MY
FATHERLAND!



WITH ALL HIS REMAINING STRENGTH, MIKE SWUNG AT NICK. NICK DODGED ASIDE AND —

TOO LATE, MY FRIEND . . . TONIGHT
G-GEORGE HAS A NEW CAPTAIN
AND FLIES TO A NEW SERVICE
AND A NEW CAUSE! MY
COFFEE HAS DONE ITS
WORK WELL!



Chapter 2.

Captured!

SWINGING EAST ACROSS THE ADRIATIC, THE LONE LANCASTER DRONED OVER THE DARK COAST TO MEET THE DAWN. THE PLANE WAS SEEN BY TWO CROSLAVIAN GUERRILLA FIGHTERS.

H.Q. WANT TO KNOW THE PLANE'S IDENTIFICATION LETTERS.

TELL THEM THAT MATNIC HAS COME TO US AGAIN, AND THE PLANE IS G-GEORGE.



THE MAN THE BRITISH KNEW AS NICK STEERED THE PLANE INTO THE VALLEY, DROPPING EXPERTLY DOWN TO A ROUGH LANDING-STRIP . . .

MAJOR MATNIC HAS SUCCEEDED AGAIN, GENERAL!

WITH FOUR LANCASTERS AT OUR COMMAND, OUR RESISTANCE MOVEMENT WILL BE THE STRONGEST IN CROSLAVIA!



REVERTING TO HIS MOTHER TONGUE, MATNIC GREETED THE GUERILLA LEADER WITH RESPECT . . .



NOVARICH BECKONED MATNIC TO FOLLOW HIM . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

THE CREW WERE BROUGHT ONE BY ONE FROM THE LANCASTER . . .

THE DRUG MATNIC GAVE THEM IS BEGINNING TO WEAR OFF.

PUT THEM IN THE GUARDHOUSE.

THEY WERE TAKEN TO A VILLA IN THE MIDDLE OF THE VILLAGE. MIKE PEERED ROUND UNEASILY.

THIS IS A WELL-DEFENDED STRONG-POINT IN THE HILLS.

YOU TRY TO ESCAPE AND WE SHOOT YOU . . . THIS WE DO NOT WISH.



PART OF THE VILLA HAD BEEN CONVERTED INTO A PRISON. SUDDENLY BUSTER GAVE A GASP.

SO THESE
DOUBLE-CROSSERS
GOT YOU, TOO, MIKE?

STONE THE CROWS . . . IT'S THE
CREW OF O-ORANGE AND THE
OTHER TWO PLANES
THAT VANISHED!



COLD RAGE FILLED MIKE AS HE REALISED HOW THE
LANCASTER CREWS HAD BEEN TRAPPED . . .

THAT CROSLAV MILITARY
MISSION GOT TWO OF OUR PLANES,
AND THAT ARCH-TWISTER MATNIC
GOT TWO . . . CANADIAN OR
NOT, HE'S CROSLAV BY
BIRTH.

THEY CALL
THEMSELVES
THE FREEDOM
FIGHTERS!



The Vanishing Bombers

AS MIKE DISCUSSED POSSIBILITIES OF A BREAK-OUT, THE DOOR WAS UNLOCKED AND **MATNIC ENTERED** — NOW IN UNIFORM.

GENERAL NOVARICH WILL SEE THE SENIOR SECTION LEADER OF OUR R.A.F. GUESTS . . .

I'LL SEE YOUR PHONEY GENERAL.



THE MAN WHO HAD FLOWN WITH THE R.A.F. AS MATT NICK, GESTURED THE GUARDS TO FOLLOW . . .

WE BOTH FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY... OUR FREEDOM FIGHTERS DESERVE BRITISH SUPPORT . . .

BRITAIN'S GIVEN HER SUPPORT TO THE PARTISANS IN THE NORTH . . . YOUR BUNCH OF TREACHEROUS BANDITS WILL GET NOTHING OUT OF US!



MATNIC LED THE WAY TO A STUDY
FITTED UP AS A WAR-ROOM . . .

ONLY ONE MAN,
OUR LEADER, IS
CAPABLE OF
SAVING OUR UNHAPPY COUNTRY
... AND THAT IS THE TIGER OF
GROSLAVIA ... GENERAL
NOVARICH ...



NOVARICH, THE TIGER, SWUNG ROUND TO
HIS WAR MAP . . .

I WILL BE FRANK...
AN ENEMY ARMY CORPS
HAS BROKEN THROUGH
TO PETROVIC... WITHOUT
YOUR LANCASTERS OUR
CAUSE IS LOST.

AND ONLY
YOUR R.A.F.
PRISONERS
CAN FLY
THEM?



A STRONG FORCE COMMANDING THE RUINED
TOWN OF PETROVIC WOULD CLEARLY
COMMAND THE WHOLE AREA . . .

IN EXCHANGE FOR OUR FREEDOM,
OUR CREWS WILL BOMB THIS GERMAN
KEY-POINT FOR YOU . . .



The Vanishing Bombers

THE CREWS WERE RELEASED TO SHARE THE AVAILABLE BOMB-LOADS BETWEEN THE FOUR LANCASTERS AND PREPARE FOR THEIR MISSION. BUSTER BROWN HAD A WORD WITH MIKE.



MIKE POINTED TO THE BOMB-DOORS OF G-GEORGE . . .



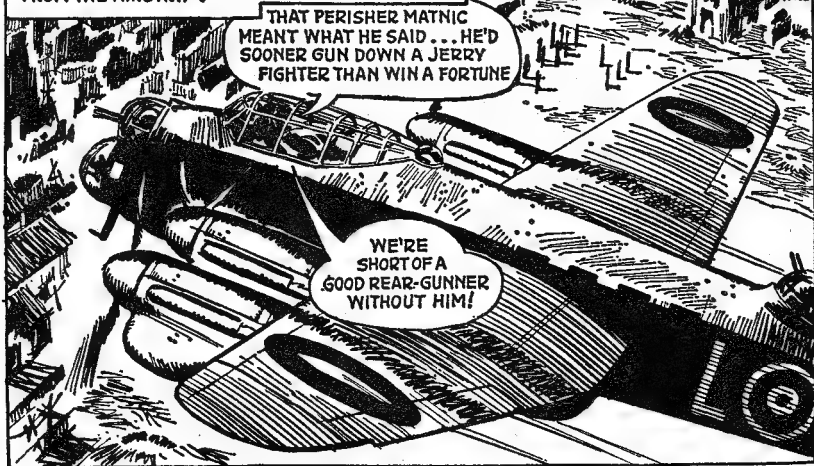
A GUERILLA TO GUARD THEM JOINED THE CREW OF EACH PLANE . . .



AS MIKE PREPARED TO START UP, HE SAW A FAMILIAR FIGURE WATCHING THEM.

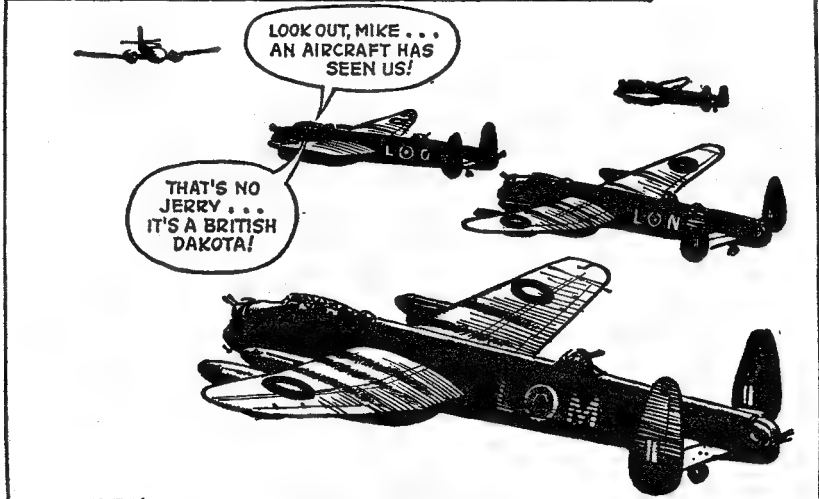


AS THE LANCASTERS TAXIED AND WERE AIRBORNE, MIKE SAW MATNIC WATCHING THEM ENVIOUSLY FROM THE AIRSTRIP.



The Vanishing Bombers

BUT ON THEIR ROUTE TO PETROVIC THEY SAW NO FIGHTERS, AND THEN —



THE DAKOTA FLASHED ITS ALDIS LAMP IN FRIENDLY GREETING
AND DRONED AHEAD OF THE RAIDERS . . .



THE SURPRISED CREW OF G-GEORGE IGNORED THE BARKED ORDERS OF THEIR ARMED GUARD . . .

GET ON WITH YOUR BUSINESS OF BOMBING!

WHY SHOULD A BRITISH PLANE DELIBERATELY LAND IN A JERRY CAMP? I'M TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS PLACE!



MEETING NO ENEMY FIRE, MIKE PUT G-GEORGE ON A HEDGE-HOPPING RUN OVER THEIR TARGET AREA . . .

THOSE MEN BELOW ARE NOT RUNNING FOR COVER, MIKE... THEY'RE WAVING US HALLO!

THAT'S NO GERMAN CAMP... THEY'RE PARTISANS AND BRITISH!



G-GEORGE BANKED AND SWEEPED SKYWARDS AGAIN . . .

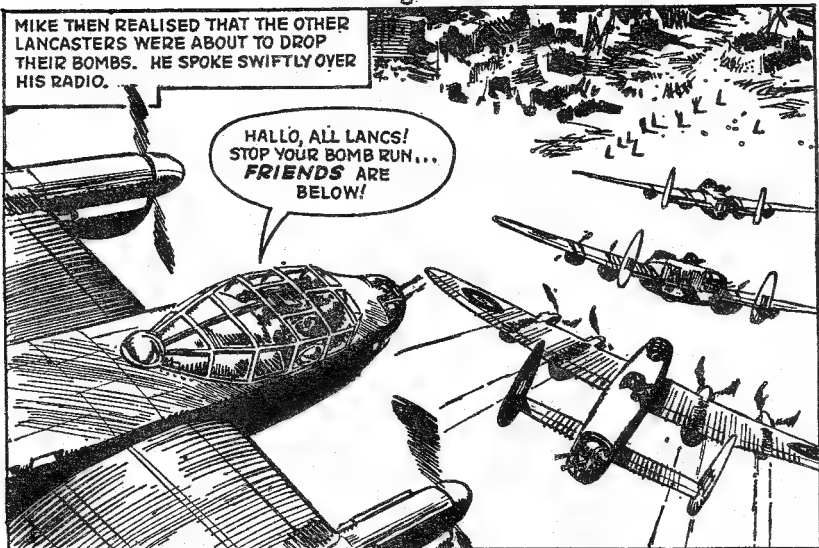


THEIR GUARD CLICKED THE BOLT OF HIS STEN THREATENINGLY . . .



MIKE THEN REALISED THAT THE OTHER LANCASTERS WERE ABOUT TO DROP THEIR BOMBS. HE SPOKE SWIFTLY OVER HIS RADIO.

HALLO, ALL LANCs!
STOP YOUR BOMB RUN...
FRIENDS ARE BELOW!



ONE BY ONE, THE BRITISH PLANES PEELED OFF AND ROARED AWAY FROM THE BATTERED MOUNTAIN TOWN. THE GUARD IN G-GEORGE THEN WHIPPED ROUND ON BUSTER.

BOMB PETROVIC,
OR I SHOOT!

IF YOU SHOOT, WE CRASH,
BOMBS BANG, AND
YOU'RE A DEAD CHARLIE
... GOT IT?



The Vanishing Bombers

BUT THE BAFFLED GUERILLA WAS THE
LEAST OF THEIR DANGERS . . .

JERRY FIGHTERS ...
WE'VE GOT TO GET
WEAVING!

AND US
WITH ONLY
CHARLIE HERE
FOR A
REAR-GUNNER!

THREE MESSERSCHMITTS SCREAMED DOWN FROM THE NORTH.

O-ORANGE CALLING ...
WE'VE ONLY TEN MORE MINUTES'
FLYING TIME, MIKE, BEFORE
THE TIME CHARGE BLOWS.

AND ENEMY AIRCRAFT
ARE ON OUR TAILS! SCATTER
AND MAKE FOR THE CAMP
LANDING-STRIP!





THE OTHER THREE LANCASTERS, BOUND FOR NOVARICH'S CAMP IN THE HILLS, COULD DO NOTHING TO HELP MIKE AND HIS CREW . . .



A FINAL FUSILLADE OF CANNON-SHELLS THUDDLED INTO G-GEORGE . . .

I'M GOING TO TRY AND LAND HER, BUSTER... BUT YOU GUYS HAD BETTER JUMP FOR IT.

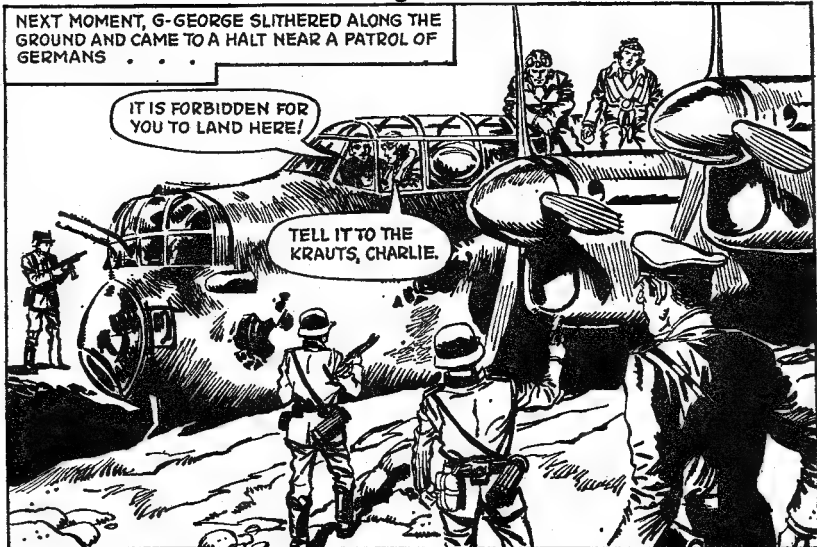
WE'LL STAY WITH YOU, MIKE.

MIKE DRAGGED THE LABOURING PLANE EASTWARDS TOWARDS SOME GREEN FIELDS AMONG THE JAGGED HILLS . . .

THE JERRY FIGHTERS HAVE GIVEN UP THE CHASE . . . WHO'S POTTING AT US NOW?

WE'RE OUT OF LUCK, MIKE... I THINK WE'RE LANDING IN A NEST OF JERRIES.

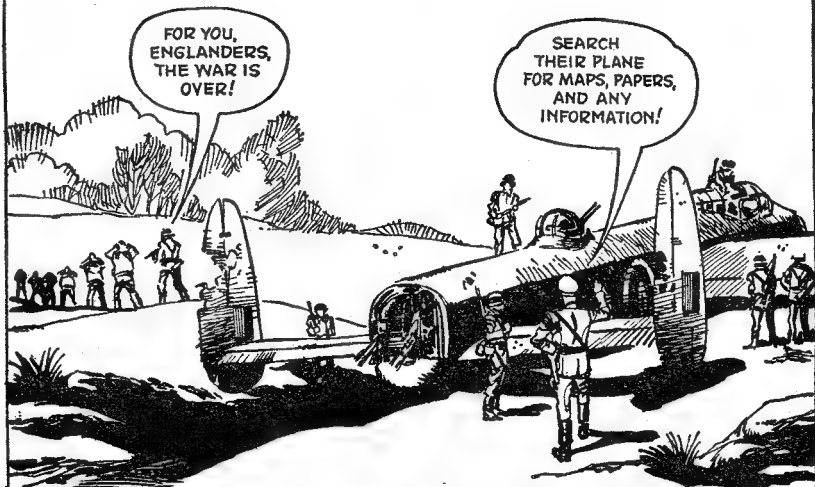
NEXT MOMENT, G-GEORGE SLITHERED ALONG THE GROUND AND CAME TO A HALT NEAR A PATROL OF GERMANS . . .



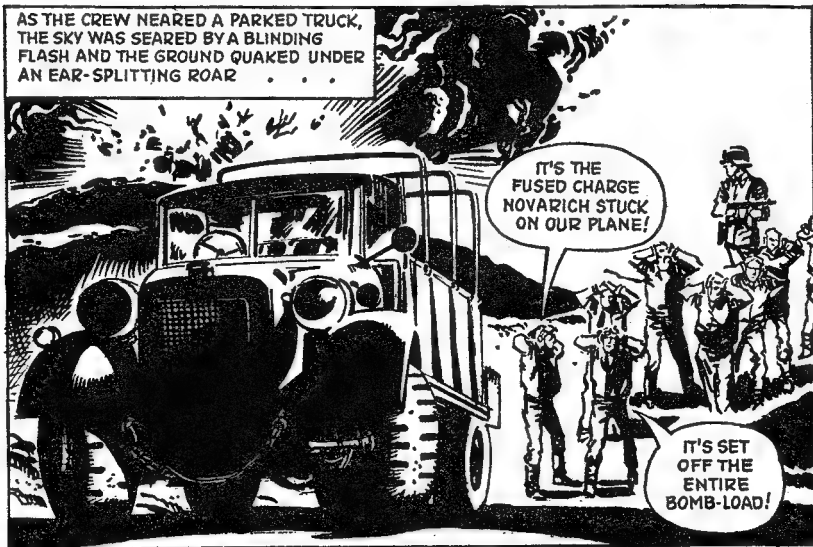
COVERED BY THE GERMAN GUNS, THE CREW LEFT THE PLANE . . .



GLOOMILY, THEY OBEYED THE ORDER TO MOVE . . .



AS THE CREW NEARED A PARKED TRUCK, THE SKY WAS SEARED BY A BLINDING FLASH AND THE GROUND QUAKED UNDER AN EAR-SPLITTING ROAR . . .



THE DEBRIS OF G-GEORGE WAS SCATTERED
OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE . . .

THE GERMAN DIDN'T REALISE
THAT THE GUERILLA WAS
CREEPING UP BEHIND HIM.

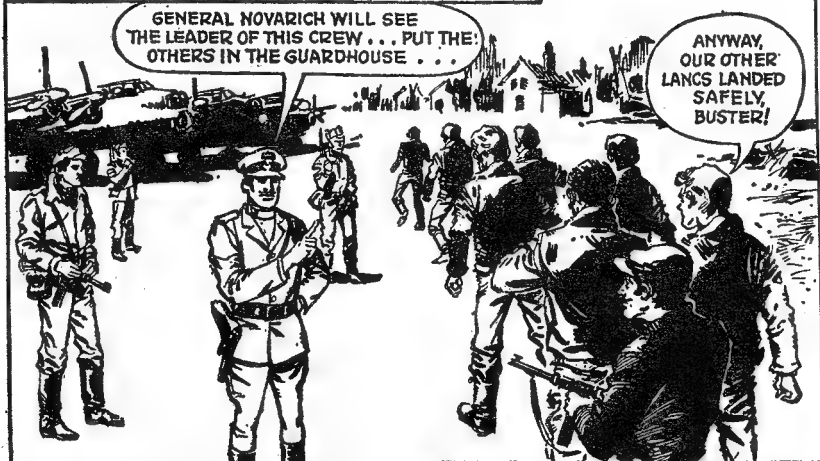


THE GERMAN WAS KNOCKED SENSELESS — AND
THEN THE GUERILLA WHIPPED ROUND ON THE CREW.



Chapter 3. Firing Squad

IT WAS THE NEXT DAY THAT THE WEARY CREW OF G-GEORGE STUMBLED INTO THE CAMP OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS . . .



MIKE WAS ESCORTED TO THE WAR-ROOM OF THE GUERRILLA LEADER WHO CALLED HIMSELF GENERAL NOVARICH . . .

YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE . . . BUT BY YOUR ORDERS NO BOMBS WERE DROPPED ON PETROVIC!

PETROVIC IS HELD BY THE PARTISANS AND BRITISH . . . NOT BY THE GERMANS!



UNGOVERNABLE ANGER BLAZED IN THE EYES OF NOVARICH, AND MIKE KNEW THEN WHY HE WAS CALLED THE TIGER.

THE PARTISAN GROUP REJECT MY LEADERSHIP . . . THEY ARE MY ENEMIES . . . THE GERMANS ARE WILLING TO BARGAIN WITH ME!

YOU DOUBLE-CROSSING QUISLING!

NOVARICH STRODE TO THE DOOR . . .

THE BRITISH WILL GET YOU IN THE END!

ALWAYS MY MISSIONS TO THE BRITISH HAVE COME BACK EMPTY-HANDED . . . ALWAYS THE BRITISH HAVE FAVOURED THE PARTISANS!



THREE WAITING GERMANS ROSE
TO GREET NOVARICH . . .

HEIL, HITLER! MY MISSION HAVE
WAITED OVERLONG FOR YOUR DECISION,
GENERAL
NOVARICH!

I HAVE DECIDED,
COLONEL KRANTZ...
I WILL ACCEPT GERMAN
MILITARY AID...

AS MIKE'S ESCORT ORDERED HIM TO
MARCH, COLONEL KRANTZ HALTED THEM...

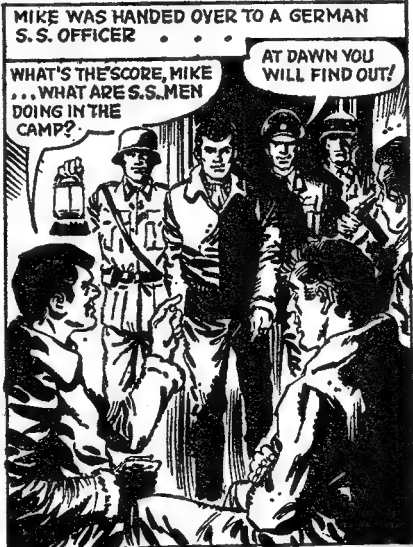
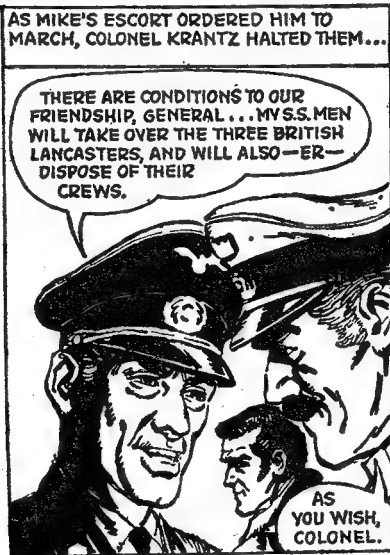
THERE ARE CONDITIONS TO OUR
FRIENDSHIP, GENERAL... MY S.S. MEN
WILL TAKE OVER THE THREE BRITISH
LANCASTERS, AND WILL ALSO—ER—
DISPOSE OF THEIR
CREWS.

AS
YOU WISH,
COLONEL.

MIKE WAS HANDED OVER TO A GERMAN
S. S. OFFICER . . .

WHAT'S THE SCORE, MIKE
... WHAT ARE S.S. MEN
DOING IN THE
CAMP?

AT DAWN YOU
WILL FIND OUT!



AS THE SUN LIGHTENED THE EASTERN SKY, A SQUAD OF S.S. TROOPERS CAME FOR THE BRITISH PRISONERS,



YOU WILL MAKE A SHORT JOURNEY WITH US.

I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THIS, MIKE...

THE TRUCKS TOOK THEM UP A WINDING TRACK INTO THE HILLS.

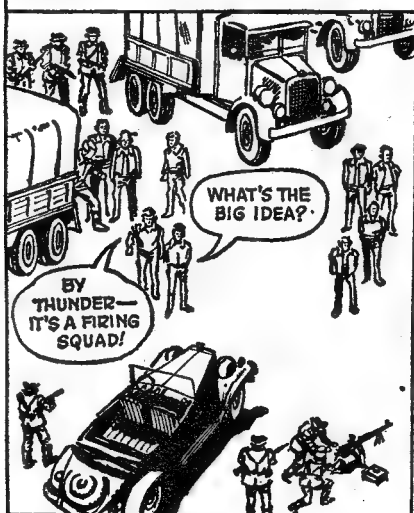


WHAT ARE WE PULLING UP HERE FOR? IT'S MILES FROM ANYWHERE!

PRISONERS, DISMOUNT!

The Vanishing Bombers

THEY HEARD THE RATTLE OF AN AMMUNITION BELT FED INTO A MACHINE-GUN



A COLD-EYED U.S. CAPTAIN MARSHALLED THE SQUAD



AS THE OFFICER SIGNALLED TO HIS MACHINE-GUNNERS, IT WAS ANOTHER GUN THAT CRACKED STACCATO ECHOES IN THE HILLS—A GUN MANNED BY *MATNIC!*



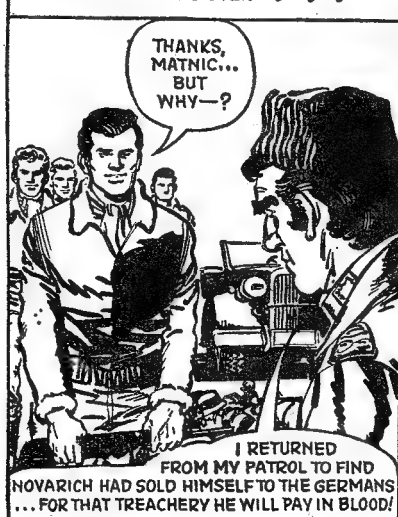
THE S.S. MEN FOUGHT BACK WITH SAVAGE DESPERATION . . .



WATCH OUT FOR RICOCHETS, MIKE!

THIS BEATS THE BAND... IT'S MATNIC MOWING 'EM DOWN!

IN A MINUTE IT WAS OVER . . .



THANKS, MATNIC... BUT WHY—?

I RETURNED FROM MY PATROL TO FIND NOVARICH HAD SOLD HIMSELF TO THE GERMANS ... FOR THAT TREACHERY HE WILL PAY IN BLOOD!

THE RESCUED R.A.F. CREWS WASTED NO TIME . . .



WE'RE GOING BACK FOR OUR PLANES, MATNIC ... ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST US?

I AM WITH YOU, MY FRIEND ... BUT NOVARICH HAS A FORCE WHO CARE ONLY FOR THE POWER THAT WILL BE THEIRS UNDER THE GERMANS...

The Vanishing Bombers



MATNIC TOOK NO NOTICE
OF THE WARNING . . .

THIS
UNIFORM
IS MY
PASSPORT!

WE'LL WAIT
TEN MINUTES,
MATNIC . . . THEN
WE SMASH- AND-
GRAB FOR THE
PLANES.

MATNIC MARCHED UP THE CENTRE OF THE TRACK,
DISREGARDING THE QUICK SUSPICION OF GERMAN
PROWLER GUARDS AND FATIGUE PARTIES . . .

IT'S ONE OF NOVARICH'S
OFFICERS . . .

GET WORKING, THEN . . .
THESE BRITISH PLANES
MUST BE MADE READY TO
FLY TO GERMANY.



The Vanishing Bombers

ONLY AT THE VILLA HEADQUARTERS OF NOVARICH WAS MATNIC HALTED . . .

SO YOU HAVE RETURNED, MATNIC . . .
THE TIGER IS DISPLEASED BECAUSE YOU
DISAPPEARED THIS MORNING . . .

I'LL SEE
NOVARICH
NOW . . .



THE OFFICER OF NOVARICH'S BODYGUARD
SHIFTED HIS PISTOL MENACINGLY . . .

YOUR GUN,
MATNIC . . .
NOVARICH'S
ORDERS!

SO THE
TIGER HAS
FEARS NOW!



CONTEMPTUOUSLY MATNIC SWUNG THE
HOLSTER AT THE OFFICER, AND AS HE
DID SO . . .

THE FOOL . . . I WARNED ALL
MY GUARDS THAT MATNIC WOULD BE A
DANGER, THAT HE MUST BE SHOT ON
SIGHT!



BLOOD-RED HATE GLEAMED
IN MATNIC'S EYES . . .

NOW I WILL RID OUR
COUNTRY OF A TIGER WHO TURNED
SNAKE!

I WARN YOU,
MATNIC . . .
MY MEN AWAIT
MY CALL!

THE FUMBLING FINGERS
OF NOVARICH FOUND THE
BELL-PUSH ON HIS DESK . . .

I HAVE SOUNDED THE ALARM-BELL
. . . MY MEN WILL KILL YOU!

THEY
WILL COME
TOO LATE TO
HELP YOU
... TRAITOR!



IN THE NEARBY GUARD-ROOM,
THE BELL RANG WITH
CLAMOROUS URGENCY . . .

IT'S THE
GENERAL'S
SIGNAL!

QUICK . . .
IT MEANS AN
INTRUDER!



NOVÁRICH'S BODYGUARD BURST
INTO THE WAR-ROOM . . .

IT IS MATNIC . . .
THE ONE WE MUST
SHOOT . . .

... ON SIGHT!



THE SHOCK-POWER OF THE BULLETS
HURLED THEIR VICTIM ACROSS THE
DESK . . .

BUT WHERE IS
NOVARICH?

MATNIC
IS DEAD!



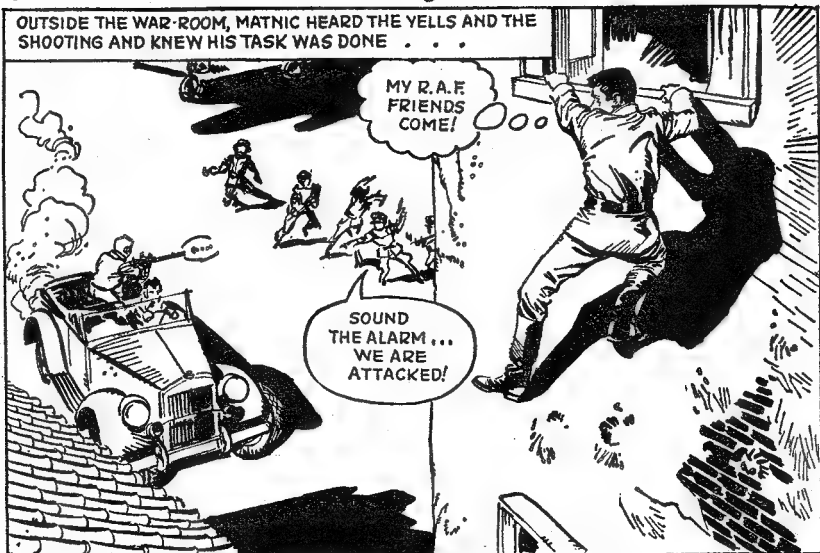
SUDDENLY ONE OF THE
GUARDS GAVE A HOARSE
YELL . . .

THIS ISN'T
MATNIC... WE HAVE
KILLED NOVARICH!

MATNIC MUST
HAVE BEEN HERE...
MUST HAVE KNOCKED
THE GENERAL OUT AND
THEN DARTED
AWAY!



OUTSIDE THE WAR-ROOM, MATNIC HEARD THE YELLS AND THE SHOOTING AND KNEW HIS TASK WAS DONE . . .



AS MATNIC LANDED, HE WAS SEEN . . .



Chapter 4. The Escape

MIKE, SPEARHEADING THE BRITISH ATTACK IN THE COMMANDEERED GERMAN CAR, KNEW THAT SURPRISE WAS THEIR ONLY CHANCE AGAINST AN ENEMY OF REGIMENTAL STRENGTH . . .

PUT 'EM IN A PANIC, BUSTER...TILL OUR BLOKES AT THE AIR-STRIP CAN GAIN CONTROL!

KEEP THE CAR CRACKING, MIKE, AND WE'LL GIVE THESE PERISHERS NO CHANCE TO ORGANISE!



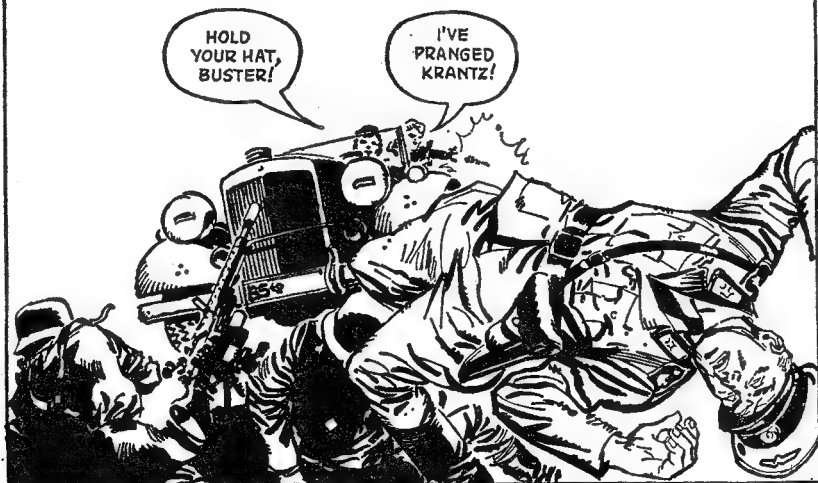
BUT AFTER THE FIRST SHOCK OF THE ONSLAUGHT, THE S.S. TROOPS RALLIED . . .

IT'S BUT ONE CAR AGAINST US... GET THAT GUN INTO ACTION!

THAT'S THE S.S. COLONEL KRANTZ!



MIKE WENT INTO A SKIDDING TURN . . .



THE CAR SPUN AND THEY
ROARED OFF AGAIN . . .



MATNIC MADE A STUMBLING RUN FOR THE CAR . . .



GRENADE IN HAND, MATNIC WAITED HIS MOMENT AND THREW . . .



TWO SECONDS LATER, THE ALLEY BEHIND THEM WAS BLOCKED BY AN EXPLOSION THAT MOMENTARILY DEAFENED THEM . . .



THE LANCASTER CREWS, LEFT BY MIKE TO SETTLE OPPOSITION ON THE AIRSTRIP, WERE MOPPING UP THE WEAK RESISTANCE THEY HAD HAD TO DEAL WITH . . .



THE ROAR OF THE POWERFUL ENGINES WAS MUSIC TO THE LANCASTER CREWS WHO SCRAMBLED ABOARD THEIR LIBERATED PLANES . . .

WE'LL HITCH-HIKE WITH O- ORANGE...

ALL THE LANCS HAVE SIGNALLED THEY'RE READY TO ROLL!



ONE BY ONE, THE PLANES WERE SAFELY AIRBORNE . . .

WE'LL BE HOME AND DRY IN BARI BY BREAKFAST-TIME, MATNIC.

FOR ME THERE IS NO RETURN TO BARI . . .



WEARING A PARACHUTE, **MATNIC** WENT TO THE EXIT DOOR, AND MIKE TRIED IN VAIN TO STOP HIM.

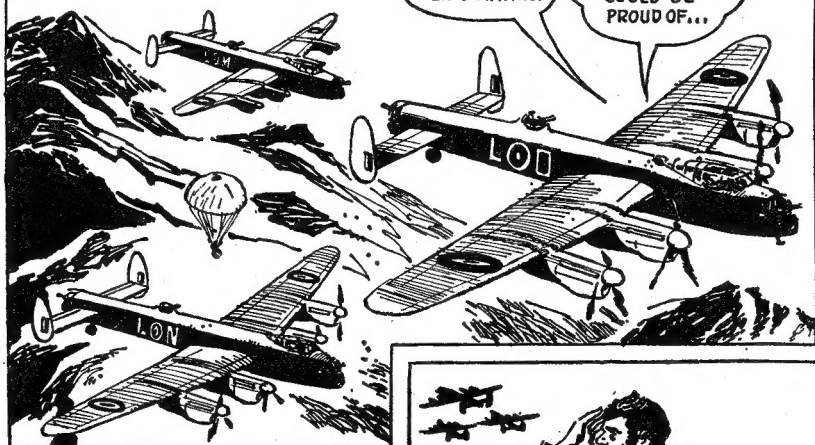
THEY COULD NEVER OVERLOOK WHAT I HAVE DONE...AND THIS IS STILL MY FATHERLAND. I WILL FIGHT THE GERMANS HERE, ALONGSIDE THE PARTISANS...

YOU'VE PAID YOUR DEBT TO THE R.A.F, MATNIC!



The Vanishing Bombers

AS THE LANCASTERS DRONED OVER THE GROSLAVIAN HILLS, A PARACHUTE FLUTTERED AND DROPPED CLEAR . . .



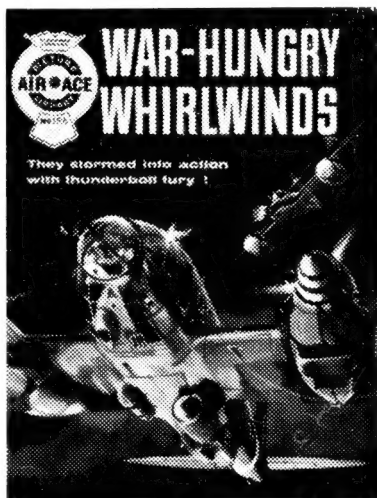
BEFORE THE LANCASTERS HEADED OUT TO SEA, THEY CIRCLED OVER MATNIC'S LANDING, AND ONE BY ONE THEIR WINGS DIPPED IN SALUTE . . .



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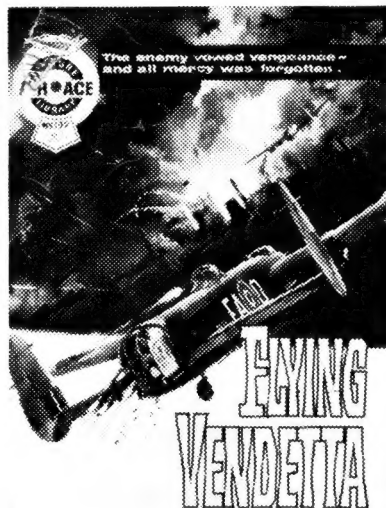
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